



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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September and December by CHHA – North Shore Branch,
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Mountain Ear



**The North Shore Branch Board
of Directors wish all
our members and friends
a Happy Holiday Season
and a Healthy and Prosperous
New Year**



Prez Mez

By Mike Hocevar

I want to thank everyone for your continued confidence in us, the board of directors and for re-electing us at the recent AGM: Hugh Hetherington, Henry Romain, Ruth Lapointe, Caroline Wickham, William Friend and myself, and for adding new board member Susan Gelinas. We all look forward to continuing the successful operation of CHHA-North Shore branch in the coming year.

I am really encouraged about the steady attendance at our monthly “Sound Advice” sessions at West Vancouver Seniors’ Activity Centre—by the way, our sessions are open to all ages. No matter how often I personally attend our monthly Sound Advice, I come away recharged and feeling positive. I marvel at the way there are a few new people appearing every time and it is most fun to assist with their questions and concerns. Thank you for passing the word to your hard of hearing friends about our sessions. We also learn from newcomers as all experi-

**February Meeting
Monday, February 15, 2016
7:00 pm at the Summerhill
135 West 15th Street,
North Vancouver
A Special Sound Advice
Session with
Flo Spratt
And
Hugh Hetherington
Everyone Welcome
For Information
Call 604-926-5222**

ences are related and good advice is always offered. Hugh Hetherington is able to clearly explain about hearing aids and assistive devices, and Flo Spratt is always ready to provide good coping strategy tips to help us in a variety of social situations. Remember also, hearing family members and friends are always welcome. There is much that they can learn too.

Personally, I always come away reminded of the need for us to be assertive. People are good about understanding and helping in any way, provided they know what help it is that we need. So that means speaking up, or maybe a bit of coaching on our part to direct them. Then it benefits everybody. I mention this because with the big year end celebratory season there will be associated social functions, dinners to attend, family events and so on. Finding a way to hear satisfactorily in these situations is often challenging, but not totally hopeless either if this advice is acted upon.

Remember the tips we have learned like using a buddy or partner to be ready to fill in bits of conversation and to arrange your best seating plan with hosts. Observe the room settings so that you can position yourself in a useful way, including perhaps knowing where there is a door is to a quieter hall or room for a momentary conversation location, as one example.

To not enjoy or to outright avoid all the wonderful gatherings because you are hard of hearing would be a real shame. Just be assertive and work it all out with others and use your own smarts and the advice you have learned through CHHA for when you're in a difficult listening or hearing scenario. You are an important part in many others' lives as they are important to you, so participate, don't be missing in action.

And always, anytime, feel free to phone us with a particular anticipated problem area for you and let's see what might be a good tip to try. This is one of the great benefits of your branch membership. Encourage others even if not a member, to connect up in this way. On this note, the board extends its heartfelt greetings of the season to you!

CHHA—North Shore Branch Programs are funded in part by Municipal Community Grants from the City and District of North Vancouver and the District of West Vancouver.

Annual General Meeting Happiness, Hearing and the Science of Positive Aging

By Mike Hocevar

On September 21 our 2015 AGM was held at the Summerhill in North Vancouver with 16 members and 10 guests in attendance. Following the short business meeting Glen Grigg, Ph.D., and Registered Clinical Counsellor gave an educational and entertaining presentation entitled "Happiness, Hearing and the Science of Positive Aging." The talk was full of great advice for enjoying life to the fullest as we enter our elder years. Provided we take care of our health, including addressing hearing and eyesight issues as we age, there is no reason for us to fear aging.

In beginning his presentation, Glen stated. "There are two things I want to link together. Hearing and happiness." He said, "Happiness is about many things – like life satisfaction – but mostly it is about the difference between what we expect and what actually happens." Hearing is a key to our general well being because it is vital for safety and social connection. Positive aging happens when we are safe, in charge of our own lives, and making the most of our health.

In his typical humorous fashion in introducing himself he stated that as a university professor he was at high risk of boring us to death. As a psychotherapist there was a risk of him being insufferably nosy, and as a researcher/consultant there was serious risk of him quoting numbers and facts that no one ever wanted to know. Glen also plays a guitar and rides a mountain bike, subjects that he tied in later in the talk.

Getting more serious, he went on to explain how happiness, hearing and positive aging fit together. Firstly, if you cannot hear well, there is a bigger and bigger difference between what you expect, and what actually happens – this is a recipe for unhappiness. What does this mean? If you cannot hear well, you use up more of your brainpower making up for the lost hearing – brainpower that is needed for staying healthy, connecting with people, and staying mentally and physically fit.

The things that help promote positive aging, for a start, are creativity and learning. In Glen's case, the electric guitar is a new venture for Glen and in addition he is learning music theory. Physical activity fits

in here also. This is especially true for activity that combines senses, judgment, movement, strength and speed. For Glen, this is where his mountain bike fits in. Another one is social connection. This includes reaching out to the new generation, which requires paying attention and not making assumptions.

Glen asked, “How does hearing fit into this?” Well, your brain, your central nervous system, ages, just like bones and muscles. Using your brain keeps this change to a minimum. Older people use their whole brain and that is why they do about as well as youngsters. Making sense of information takes a lot of brainpower. Our ears, our information sources, decline with age. But, of course you say, “I can still hear.” But if your hearing was extraordinary, later in life it will become average. Your ability to hear as wide a range of frequencies diminishes. The sounds passing through your ears, and into your brain, are not as loud and not as clear.

So, why don’t we always notice this change? Change is gradual, so you adjust over time. Contrast this with sudden hearing loss, perhaps caused by colds and other respiratory conditions. Or, maybe temporary nerve loss due to noise. Our brain attempts to compensate for this decline. Increased concentration and selected attention make up for volume loss. Analysis, memory and experience fill in the gaps using things like context, visual clues and stored knowledge. In other words, as you get older, you use more brainpower making up for hearing loss – exactly the kind of brainpower that has limits. It’s important to save brainpower. Do this by using multiple sources of input like, speech sounds, visual clues, and whatever else helps. Also, reduce interference by going slowly and reducing background noise. And, importantly, make use of hearing aids and other assistive devices.

The famous piano player Arthur Rubenstein, and an unnamed 80-year-old master athlete were mentioned as inspirational examples of maintaining enjoyment of favorite pastimes even as they aged. Mr. Rubenstein almost quit at one time based on the fear he couldn’t deliver the performances at a satisfactory standard as his hand speed began to slow down. But he changed the tempo, added in new works that suited his playing ability and continued on. The athlete story was a real revelation. This athlete at age 24 could do a 100 metre sprint in just over 10 seconds. Compare that to the world-class sprinter Usain Bolt, who clocks in at just under 10 seconds. At age 80, the unnamed sprinter was timed at 12.4 seconds—

which is faster than most NFL football players!

Glen says, it is important to make affirmative lifestyle choices. Know your life goals. Give help. Receive help. “Self actualize” and do the things that matter to you. It is almost certain that these things are going to involve communicating through spoken language, in other words hearing. Older people are actually better at anticipating outcomes, planning and thinking flexibly.

Lifestyle choice is enhanced with hearing, but also, realize that favorite interests and activities can generally continue for your whole life and is most encouraged by Glen. He demonstrated that by saying, while some aspects become slower in our functioning capacities, that older people have some advantages. Take, for example, older drivers. Even though their reflexes and senses don’t perform as well as younger drivers, they still outperform them. How do they do it? They have been practicing for a long time so their skills are really developed. The movie Top Gun was another illustration; that the older pilots outperformed the younger in jet fighter combat stimulations even while using outdated aircraft, because of their ability to stay calm and instincts for planning and anticipating.

Emphasize the positives. Every stage of life has challenges. Some things that you can do are carrying a notebook, and creating routines and helpful habits. Turn up the lights and turn down the sound. Keep in touch with the difference between what’s happening and what you think about what’s happening. Positive thinking activates positive neural pathways in the brain.

Glen amused us when he suggested some really goofy ideas about what to do about old age. Volunteer to be prisoners in a medium security prison that you pay for. Call the prisons “gated communities.” Call the guards “security personnel.” Watch lots of television. Only socialize with the other prisoners.

What is the best way to promote positive aging? You should have no chronic or traumatic psychological stress. Don’t overeat. Get lots of moderate stress from exercise, effort, socializing, and intellectual activity. Keep using your brain. It will become damaged and deteriorate over time, but, if used, it will compensate by reorganizing and building new neural networks.

For the link to happiness he said you must anticipate

the changes of aging so that they do not cause you dismay and distress. By being active, you experience yourself as connected, engaged in possibilities, and effective.

For the link to hearing, looking after your hearing means less anxiety and stress because your “safety system” does not always have to be on high alert. Also, looking after your hearing means that you are using less brainpower in decoding fragments of communication, and saving your brain for doing the things that bring you joy. Good hearing means less stress, better learning, better memory, and keeping your brain healthy. Don’t dismiss new hearing aids too quickly if they don’t at first seem to help. Remember, it takes time to build those new neural connections. With patience, you will be rewarded with better hearing.

To conclude his talk, Glen offered up one of his favorite jokes and which he says he enjoys more and more as he shares it. It is about a woman who joined a local regular self-help type group. She had some hearing loss but maintained continuing with the group and the constant message she came away with was, “double your weirdness.” So she bought new, bold clothes. She traded in her trusty old Volkswagen for a snazzy newer model car, among other things. One day she went out and got herself a hearing aid and she found out, that the “double your weirdness” message really was, “develop your awareness”.

Glen said, “Just remember to make the most of being the wonderful, wild, unique person you are! If every one of you go away, and “double your weirdness,” I will be very happy!”

Subsequently, in the Question & Answer feedback to the talk, a number of examples arose of living life and discovering new things to experience and their benefits, as we age. One lady suggested just putting on your coat and going out for a walk in the neighbourhood. Or, in taking up a leisure activity, like dragon boating as mentioned by another person, which offers a combination of social interaction, personal goal setting and healthy exercise. All this discussion led to a final conclusion to the evening: that everyone should just go out and find one new thing to take up.

Thank you Glen, for another great presentation.

Coping Strategies

Mondegreens and Hearing Loss

by Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

Our brains are marvelous organs. They are always trying to make sense out of what we hear. Thus, when we miss something, they try to fill in the gaps in what we misheard with something that seems to make sense, even if it doesn't really make sense--if that makes sense.

As a result, we may be listening to a song on the radio and because of our faulty hearing, mishear some words—they actually sound like gibberish at the moment--but our brains take what we have already heard and understood, and rework the "gibberish" with similar-sounding words to come up with a plausible rendition of what we missed. The results are often totally off the wall, but make sense to us in a "funny" kind of way.

This happens to hearing people too, of course, but it is ever so much more common among us hard of hearing people. When such bloopers are done with song lyrics, they go by the fancy name of "mondegreens".

The origin of this term is rather fascinating. Here's how it all began. American writer Sylvia Wright (1917-1981) explained, "When I was a child, my mother used to read aloud to me from Percy's Reliques, and one of my favorite poems" (1) was the 17th century Scottish ballad, "The Bonnie Earl o' Moray". She continued, "As I remember, the first stanza began":

"Ye Highlands and ye Lowlands, Oh, where hae ye been?

They hae slain the Earl o' Moray, And Lady Mondegreen".

Years later, in her essay "The Death of Lady Mondegreen", published in Harper's magazine in November 1954, she described "the bonny Earl holding the beautiful Lady Mondegreen's hand, both bleeding profusely but faithful unto the death". (1)

Imagine her surprise when she eventually learned that Lady Mondegreen existed only in her imagination. The correct words for the last two lines of the stanza really were:

"They hae slain the Earl o' Moray, and laid him on the green".

She had completely misheard the last line and her brain came up with, "And Lady Mondegreen"!

As a result, since the year 2000, the phantom "Lady Mondegreen's" name has been immortalized in English dictionaries and is used to describe all mishearings of this type.

"Mondegreens are a sort of aural malapropism. Instead of saying the wrong word, you hear the wrong word or words. The word mondegreen is generally used for misheard song lyrics, although technically it can apply to any speech." (2)

Mondegreen is defined as a "misunderstood or misinterpreted word or phrase resulting from a mishearing of the lyrics of a song". Another definition of a mondegreen is a "mishearing or misinterpretation of a phrase as a result of near-homophony, in a way that gives it a new meaning". In plain English, this means we fill in the missing words with other words that sound much the same, but the words are completely different and as a result, so is the meaning.

Mondegreens are most often inadvertently created when you are listening to a poem or a song that is not quite loud enough or clear enough. The result is that your brain substitutes words that sound somewhat similar, and yet still make some kind of sense.

Here is an example. When my wife was a teen, a new song was released called "Bad Moon Rising". The chorus went:

Don't go around tonight, well, it's bound to take your life, there's a bad moon on the rise.

But my wife always heard the last line as; "There's a bathroom on the right"!

Unfortunately, because we hard of hearing people may not hear the full range of human speech, some syllables may sound totally different or be missing entirely. Our brains "co-operate" and fill in the missing parts with their "best guess". But so often it is wrong. As a result, we end up with "knowing" things that are not right.

I remember as a little guy--before I could read--singing hymns in church--but what I sang was apparently not what everyone else was singing! It wasn't until some years later when I could read that I realized that what I had been singing wasn't right at all.

It's scary to think of how much of what we learned by hearing at home, in school and in church could be

totally wrong—and we don't have a clue.

That is why we hard of hearing people need to check our facts visually to be sure our brains didn't do a number on us with yet another mondegreen.

(1) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mondegreen>

(2) http://www.fun-with-words.com/mala_mondegreens.html

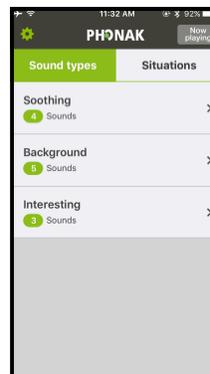
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<http://hearinglosshelp.com/blog/mondegreens-and-hearing-loss/>.

Gotta Love that iPhone (Part 5) Tinnitus Apps

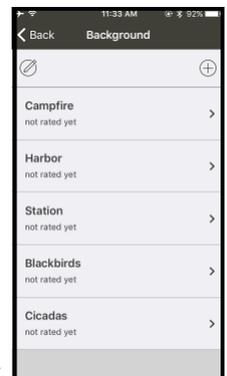
By Hugh Hetherington

Tinnitus is a condition affecting 10-20% of the population. It can range from very mild to severe and life affecting. I have noticed that there are a great many



apps available in the App Store that can be used to either help mask tinnitus symptoms or to try and measure the frequency and loudness of the tinnitus. Many of the apps that I have looked at appear to be of dubious value. There are, however, a few that are worth trying out to determine their usefulness. One is produced by Phonak called "Tinnitus

Balance" and is designed to be used as part of a tinnitus management program along with your hearing care professional. It provides for a number of sounds categorized as soothing, background, and interesting. In each category you can add a variety of sounds from the included



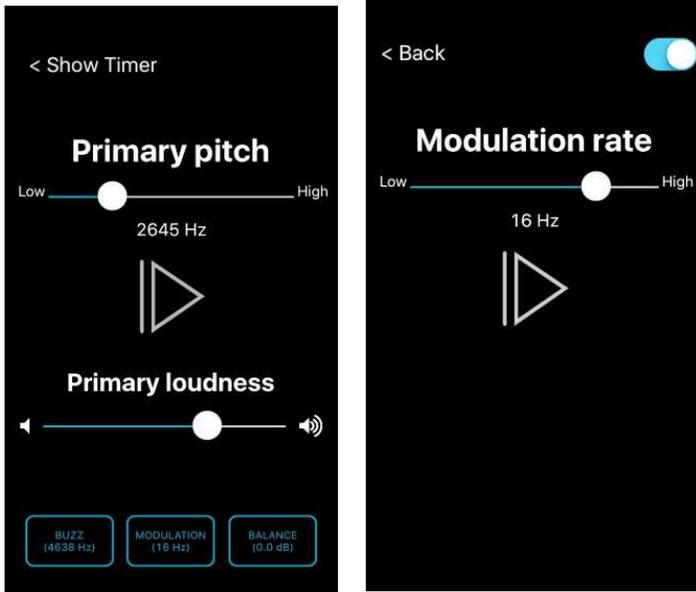
library or from your own music library.



The other App that I found interesting is called "myTinnitus." It is available in a free version with ads and a Pro-version, ad free. It is a simple app that allows someone with tinnitus to describe the sound they are hearing by comparing it to se-

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lectable sounds of varying pitch, loudness and modulation. The types of sounds are categorized as tonal, multi-tone, noise, and buzz.



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
North Shore Branch
Gratefully Acknowledges
a \$500 Grant From the
West Vancouver Kiwanis Club
For the purchase of our free Booklet
“Talking With Hard of Hearing People,
Here’s How to do it Right, Eh!”

All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association or CHHA – North Shore Branch.

Sound Advice

Presented by:

**The Canadian Hard of Hearing
Association**

North Shore Branch

**The group meets on the First
Friday of each month from
10:00 AM to 12 Noon**

at the West Vancouver Seniors’
Activity Centre’s Social Rec Room,
695 21st Street in West Vancouver.

**The January Meeting will be on
January 8th (2nd Friday)**

When we meet, we discuss topics and issues
dealing with hearing loss.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Bring a friend, a family member,
they are welcome too.

Subjects to be addressed include:

Technology; Speechreading;

Effective Coping Strategies;

Behavioural Issues;

Improving Relationships;

Improving Hearing Environments

For Information call:

604-926-5222



**CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION
NORTH SHORE BRANCH
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov. _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

Please mail application to:

CHHA—North Shore Branch
Attention: Treasurer
600 West Queens Road
North Vancouver, B.C.
V7N 2L3

Cheque enclosed

Money Order Enclosed

Charitable Registration No.
BN 89672 3038 RR0001

I wish to support the aims of CHHA and the North Shore Branch and enclose my \$40.00 annual membership fee. (National \$30.00, Branch \$10.00). Membership is paid annually from 1 October to 30 September.